1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Schebesta (1934) estimates the total population of the Ituri Mbuti to be more than 35,000, in an area of approximately 100,000 kilometers; Putnam's estimate was 40,000 within the same area. Lloyd (1899) gives the Pygmy population as fewer than 10,000, using information given to him by a Pygmy in the Central Ituri. According to this information the Pygmies inhabited the forest for a distance of seven days' march from east to west, and six days from north to south; and that there were 40 chiefs, each with from 40 to 200 followers, a few with as many as 500. There is no official count that can be drawn on, but Schebesta and Putnam both traveled extensively through the entire Ituri area, and the closeness of their estimates favors the acceptance of their figures as fair approximations. Lloyd's reference is interesting in that it gives some indication of what an individual Pygmy considers to be the extent of the Mbuti and their territory.

Reviewing his interpretation of demographic data collected on his first two visits to the Congo, as set out in "Die Bambuti Pygmäen vom Ituri," Schebesta (1952, 50–53) later says that among the Efe archers the average number of children born to each woman is three, of which two survive. He also finds that there is a

[1] Each hut represents a nuclear family—man, wife, and unmarried children.

[P.160-D]

[P. 161-A]
162 slight excess of females in the composition of the population. He gives the following figures, evidently from a population of 411 adults.

	Children Per Cent	Adults Per Cent	Total Per Cent
Male	48.0	48.9	48.4
Female	52.0	51.1	51.6

[165] Infant mortality (32.7 per cent)
Average age 27–30
9 widowers among 201 men
9 widows among 210 women
14 polygamous families (3.1 per cent)

16. Demographic data for the Sua net hunters is [114] not available. Putnam kept detailed medical records for all members of the band for a decade, but many of these have been lost in the course of shipment to the United States, and the few that are available do not provide a [184] representative picture. From such data as are available, there does not seem, however, to be any significant difference between the two groups.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

Death, Funerals, and Mourning

264 [184] [168] Burial is the custom among the net hunters, as with the archers. In general it follows the same pattern, taking place inside or immediately beside the hut of the deceased; the hut is pulled down over the grave and the camp deserted immediately. No weapons, utensils, ornaments, or food are buried with the corpse. [161] Nor is there any attempt to find the cause of death and to place the blame.

• 165 Most deaths occur from causes easily understandable to the Pygmy. Infection is rare. Pneumonia and dysentery are the major fatal illnesses. The greatest single cause of accidental mortality is a fall from a tree (the trees are of great height, with few low branches to break a fall). Other possible and not infrequent causes of accidental death include the falling of dead branches on top of huts, which may kill several people at one time. Death through burning may occur owing to the habit Pygmies have of getting up at night to relieve themselves, then squatting down almost on top of the fire to get warm. At such times they smoke [276] strong tobacco, which they inhale deeply and sometimes faint as a result, falling into the fire.

[P. 222-B]

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.222-C]

Far less important than disease or accidental death is animal hostility—elephants, buffalo, and leopards being the major sources of danger. It is extremely rare for any Pygmy to be killed by one of these animals. The net-hunting Mbuti have effective medicines against poisonous snakes.

For most illnesses, says Putnam, the Pygmy can find a local remedy. For stomach upsets and diarrhea an enema (a hollow reed with a gourd gummed to one end) is administered, with the use of vegetable decoctions containing *yorogoro* bark for the former complaint, and *tebo* liana for the latter. These enemas are also used to produce abortions. For ailments that they are unable to cure and that are foreign to them, some may seek the help of a villager witch doctor, though Mbuti opinion varies as to their efficiency.

Death, then, is accepted as just as natural a phenomenon as birth, and the body is accorded little ritual respect. There are, unlike Schebesta's account for the archers, cited examples of wailing. The following instances taken from the notes of Anne Putnam illustrate its extent.

Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

1. A Pygmy who had been visiting another band returned to his own camp and reported that a cousin of his had died. A wailing, suddenly started, was taken up, mostly by women but also by men and children, all over the camp. It lasted for 10 minutes and was repeated several times during the evening for five minutes at a time. Everyone went to sleep as usual; there was a final wail on waking the next morning. 763

2. A newborn infant (son of one of the most important hunters in the band) died at night. Only its father and mother wailed. Early in the morning the parents dug a pit in the house and buried the baby, wrapped in a small mat, with no ceremony. The next morning the couple dismantled the house and, using the same material, rebuilt it on the other side of the clearing. That night the father danced as usual. 763 764

3. An old Mbuti woman died while visiting the village. She was the mother of three of the male members of the band. Most of her relatives were with her when she died, and they wailed. When the news was received back in the hunting camp, such of her relatives as remained there wailed. Only one of them, one of the great hunters of the band, left to attend the burial. 763

4. There was an epidemic in a hunting camp, 763 731 165.

[P. 222-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.223-A]

763 and two people died. After burial and wailing,
731 camp was broken. On the march to another site a
• 165 woman who had not contracted the illness died, although she was not "ready to die." Within two weeks a woman gored by a buffalo (an extremely rare occurrence) died from her wounds. Following this last event, there was a consultation, and it was suggested that the band should disperse as there was some strong influence at work.[1] However, the dispersal did not take place.

763 5. A very well-liked hunter died while in the
[754] village. There was some talk that a half-paralyzed Pygmy, also a member of the band, had put a curse on him; but this in no way impaired the friendship between the accused and the children of the deceased. When the Pygmy was dying, his son wanted to take him back to the forest but was persuaded to let him die in the village in peace. His family and friends were present; those in the hut wailed occasionally; those outside were busy cooking. When he died the wailing broke out anew, and relatives started coming into the village from the forest. His villager patron could not come, so he sent his brother, the headman of a village a few

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

rest-house or with other Europeans. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam had long established their own *bona fides*, and indeed fitted perfectly into the traditional village structure in this area, where a number of different village tribes converge. Their friendship for me placed me on a particularly favorable footing with both the villagers and the Mbuti, and I knew that I could count on protection from any interference from other Europeans, administrators included, who might wish to visit me. (Naturally I established perfect accord with the central and local administration, who offered every co-operation, but I was particularly concerned that I should not receive "friendly visits," as it was the policy of both villagers and Mbuti, for different reasons, to keep Europeans out of the forest.)

Having established my headquarters, building a somewhat larger but otherwise typical mud house on the fringe of the village where the Mbuti had their semi-permanent village camp (see Plan 1A, 1B), I paid my respects to the divers local village chiefs and head men, mostly of the Bira, Ndaka, and Ngwana tribes. At this time the local Mbuti band was in the village, but a sudden epidemic of stomach disorders, resulting in a number of unexpected deaths, caused them to leave for a prolonged hunting spell in the forest, taking me with them.

While the deaths, which included men, women and children, were most untimely and unhappy from a personal point of view, they achieved everything else that I could have wished for as an anthropologist. Prior to precipitating the flight back to the forest, they gave me an opportunity to study in the greatest detail the reaction to the death of an Mbuti in the village, both from the village point of view and from that of the Mbuti themselves. I at once witnessed what I had seen on my previous visit when observing the *nkumbi* initiation; namely, the almost desperate attempt of the villagers to assert authority over the Mbuti. In this case the attempt was made by controlling the mourning and burial proceedings, claiming that the Mbuti had no ritual authority in this respect and were dependent on their *kpara* ("masters"). The villagers attempted to subject the Mbuti to the supernatural sanctions of village lore, and then they attempted to assert more direct political control by calling on their own ritual specialists to determine the cause of the deaths, and to search for the witch responsible. This will be described later (pp. 74 *seq.*); it is mentioned here to show how closely I was thrown into contact, at the outset, with the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

her milk dries up and the child is given to someone else to feed, or if it is weaned early, then intercourse is apparently resumed. The third father, however, while acknowledging this to be the accepted pattern, began sleeping with his wife again within a month. This he did even though he had the rare advantage for an Mbuti of having two other wives. His action caused a major dispute. (See p. 207 *seq.*)

During pregnancy there are no restrictions; sexual activity in early pregnancy is believed to hurry matters along, and during the latter stages is merely considered uncomfortable, and possibly physically injurious to the child and mother.

As the evening settles in, nuclear families sit around their family hearths outside the huts, talking across the camp at each other until they go inside to sleep, or simply lie down to sleep by the fire (the women nearly always sleep inside, but youths and men frequently sleep on their hunting nets either by their own fire or by a central fire). Even when families have retired inside their huts, conversation continues between them. If there is any singing, other than of lullabies, the camp divides into age groups, each building its own fire. Unless there is an *elima* or *molimo* festival, there is no marked division between the sexes.

On retiring for the night family hearths are brought inside the huts, and any central fires are also brought inside unless someone is sleeping by them. When a central fire is broken up, each family tends to take an ember and add it to their own hearth. A fire is not left untended at night. During the night a man may awaken and stoke up a fire, warming himself by the blaze. At such times, when cold, the Mbuti smoke particularly heavily, and as a result they sometimes fall unconscious. They may fall into the fire and suffer serious burns, occasionally fatal, and this is one of the few generally cited causes of accidental death—other than falling from a tree.

On days when the hunt stays in the camp, because of rain or because some dispute has caused a rift, both men and women attend to specific chores. Men repair and add to their nets and make new bows and arrows; the women roll twine and work at basketry. Both may make and decorate bark cloth, a major activity on such a day. A good part of the day is always given to singing, dancing, playing games and storytelling. There is a constant shifting from family groupings to age groupings, but mealtime is the only time when there is a definite emphasis on the nuclear family. Even then, male youths, hunters and elders may take their food to a central fire and

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

hunter may initiate the action. Thus the *elima* and the *molimo*, which are crisis festivals, are initiated by the hunters, but it is the elders who control them and give them their spiritual quality. It is the elders who act not only as arbiters between the members of the band, but between the band and the forest, between this life and the next. Even in the most ordinary run of everyday life there is seldom a day that does not demand from one elder or another, man or woman, some opinion that will be couched in terms like "such and such is good for (or pleasing to) the forest," or "this makes my spirit (*roho*) feel good."

The greatest departures from daily life occur when the band visits the village, or when a villager visits the band. In either case it is as though the whole social structure of the Mbuti were suddenly changed. A single individual becomes, all at once, a chief. Age groups break up and nuclear families come to the fore. The only central fire will be that of the "chief." But as this is not part of the forest world, exceptions occur within the forest context only rarely. There is seldom any disaster such as the invasion of a camp by elephant, though it happens sometimes. Hunting is generally more than adequate throughout the year. But though hunger does sometimes come to the Mbuti, starvation is unknown. Sickness is not uncommon, but is rarely serious. Throughout the year daily life goes its usual way interrupted only by major, inevitable crises of the life cycle.

BIRTH

Birth is the first crisis of life, and among the Mbuti it is, as elsewhere, not without its attendant dangers. Though no statistics are available, it is the opinion of villagers and Mbuti, and of many Europeans, doctors and otherwise, who know both communities, that infant mortality is appreciably less among the Mbuti, and sterility less common. This may be due to the fact that their relative isolation has defended the Mbuti against the venereal diseases widespread among the villagers. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the Mbuti evidently feel less need for concern at childbirth. This applies to both the nuclear family and to the band. There is absolutely no formal recognition on the part of the band, and only the barest of interest. Considering the fluid and nonlineal composition of the band this is not surprising, particularly since, for this type of band, birth is only one form of recruitment, and by no means the most sure or

585 628 many new faces, and no doubt this in itself laid the groundwork for future matchmaking. For a month or so after marriage she would work for and with the other women of the camp, and then set up housekeeping on her own.

Illness and Death

757 For most of his bodily ills the pygmy can find a local remedy. Gastric disorders and diarrhea plague them rather frequently. For these the universal cure is an enema (enemas are even used to produce abortions). Any pygmy, apparently, can give an enema to any other pygmy, but as a rule it is the women who give them to their husbands, children, and female friends. The instrument is a long reed with a gourd gummed on one end; the operator thrusts the other end into the patient's rectum and holds up the gourd end. The gourd is filled with various vegetable decoctions used in solution; these include the *tebvo* liana for diarrhea and *gorogoro* bark for stomach upsets.

755 177 When a pygmy is suffering from some mysterious ailment which he and his fellows are unable to cure and which seems to be magical in nature, he will go to the village of his Negro hosts and beg the local witch doctor to cure him by sucking out "disease objects," by cupping with horns, or by the use of herbs.

• 165 The greatest single cause of mortality in the pygmy community is falling from a tree. When a pygmy falls from such a height, he has no real chance of survival, for there are seldom branches below him. The second most frequent cause of death is falling branches. As the pygmy camp is always constructed in the primary forest itself, never in a clearing, a branch falling in a windstorm may hit a house, killing four or five people at once.

[P.340-B]

After this come the various diseases which kill the pygmies. Pneumonia and dysentery are the greatest killers; infection is rare. Far less important than disease even is the action of hostile animals—elephants, buffalo, or leopards. Once in a while an old leopard, too old to catch antelope, will dare run the risk of sneaking into a pygmy camp at night. The pygmy houses have no doors, and the leopard may slink into a house and grab a pygmy. At the noise so created, other pygmies will wake up and attack the leopard with spears or firebrands. Sometimes the leopard wins completely and carries off his victim's body, to munch at leisure. Sometimes he drops the mangled corpse, and at other times the pygmy may survive. I have seen one pygmy woman who had most of her face bitten away by a leopard and who still lived. The pygmy resistance to wound infections is incredibly great, although they will die like flies from pneumonia.

Another occasional cause of death is burning. Pygmies are unusually restless during the sleeping hours of the night, and individuals get up frequently to relieve themselves. After doing so the pygmy seldom goes back to bed immediately. He usually sits in front of his hut for a while, in front of the fire. Here he will often light up his pipe and take a deep puff of tobacco, apparently to get the maximum effect of the nico-

165 372 [276] tine in the least possible time. Sometimes this puff knocks him out; he faints, and falls forward into the fire. Very often there are others up about the same business, who, when they hear the thud, will run over and pull the victim out of the fire, in which case he will survive with bad burn scars. Sometimes, however, no one hears him, and the burns are fatal.

765 [764] [273] When a pygmy dies, his kinsmen bury him near the camp. They get bananas or wine ready-made from their Negroes, and a regular bout of wine drinking begins. The members of the deceased's family cover themselves with white pipe clay, and weep and wail for several days. This noisy manifestation of grief is intermittent, and formally controlled. Sometimes they even put it off for two or three days until all the relatives who have been away visiting at other camps can be gathered in. Most of it is done by women, who will weep and wail for a while in concert, then rest together, then weep together again for another spell. Anyone who is really overcome with emotion weeps quietly by him or herself, alone and without interruption.

768 After a few days of this the whole group will break camp and move on to some other site, unless there are strong objections to leaving. In any case, they never return to the grave, and never decorate or touch it.

[P.341-B]